

## Annex 9 - Guidelines SPA portfolio-level results system (SPRS)

February 2026

# GUIDELINES SPRS

This document provides an overview of the new, proposed SPA Portfolio-level Results System (SPRS) for SPA partners. In the new system, SPA partners will publish three high-quality case studies per year, mapped onto domains of change, and produced according to a standard template. They will also be expected to report on two to five output indicators, providing a sense of scale across the portfolio.

## The purpose of the SPRS

As with any portfolio-based system, there are multiple potential purposes. However, the primary purpose of the SPRS is to enable better communication of SPA partner results to the wider public and other stakeholders, including the Danish government. Specifically, the system will be designed to feed into the OpenAid website<sup>1</sup> to complement existing information, such as financial information on where Danish MFA money is spent.

The system will likely also be used to enhance learning and decision-making going forward by providing a structured overview of key changes by strategy area across the SPA period. For example:

- There may be some analysis and reporting at portfolio level. For example, information generated through the SPRS could be analysed alongside other mechanisms to produce some short, annual summaries of SPA partners' work.
- The system should enable MFA and Danish CSOs to establish a 'light and shade' impression of the number of case studies against key criteria, such as geography and sector. For example, it will be possible to see how far SPA partners feel their work is addressing key issues from the overall MFA Strategy, such as climate change and migration.
- Case studies produced through the system should be based on clear evidence that provides plausible linkages between activities and outcomes. As part of reviewing cases, they could easily be shared with other organisations to enhance mutual learning. For example, in a previous evaluation, two SPA partners had developed case studies around support to refugee-led organisations, but were unaware of the work the other was doing. Swapping the case studies consequently generated some interesting discussions.
- MFA aims to develop and pursue learning questions as part of the wider portfolio-based system, and this should also contribute to wider learning.

### *How is the SPRS designed to work?*

The new SPRS is based around five key features:

- the development of regular, purposefully sampled, high-quality case studies, mapped onto a set of domains of change;
- between two and five output indicators to capture contributions towards the Danish development strategy;
- more consistent annual reporting formats;
- joint learning / evaluation questions; and
- a Southern partner survey (or set of surveys).

These guidelines only deal with the first two of these features – the case studies and the output indicators. There are separate, more detailed guidelines for developing the case studies and reporting on the output indicators.

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<sup>1</sup> See <https://openaid.um.dk>

## The case studies

SPA partners publish at least three case studies annually. Each of these must be mapped to at least one of a set of domains of change and at least one of the funded activities, which will enable the case studies to be retrieved by users according to standardised criteria.,

### What are the domains of change?

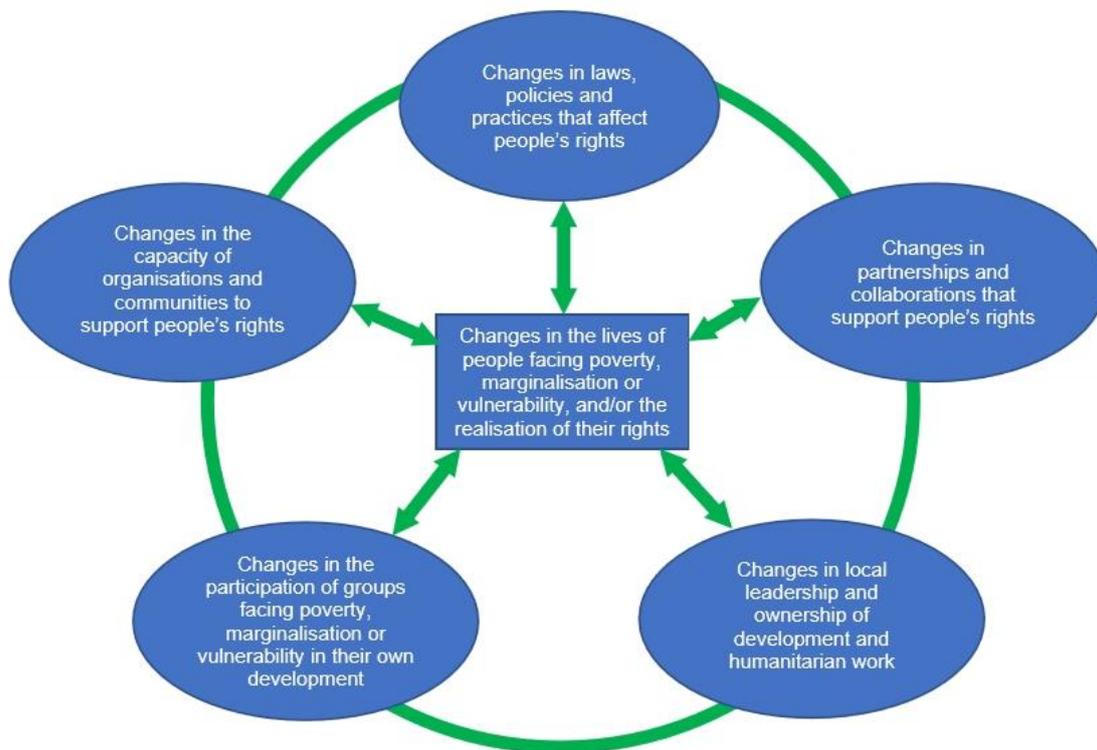
Domains of change are broad areas of change to which different levels of an organisation or donor are expected to contribute. The domains are broad and generic, as they are designed to be applied in very different contexts and at different levels.

The domains developed for the SPRS are based around three key areas that have long been the focus of Danish CSOs' work – policy influencing, capacity development and partnerships – supplemented by participation and local leadership. These five domains all contribute to a domain covering changes in peoples' lives. The domains are:

- Changes in the **lives** of people facing poverty, marginalisation or vulnerability, and/or the realisation of their rights;<sup>2</sup>
- Changes in laws, **policies** and practices that affect people's rights;
- Changes in the **capacity** of organisations and communities to support people's rights;
- Changes in **partnerships** and collaborations that support people's rights;
- Changes in the **participation** of groups facing poverty, marginalisation or vulnerability in their own development; and
- Changes in **local leadership** and ownership of development and humanitarian work.

The domains are configured as a diagram with five outer domains, all interacting with one another, and all contributing to the central domain.

Table 1: Domains of Change



The domains of change are designed to serve two main purposes. First, they should ensure that case studies are focused on change not activities. Second, they could enable some cross-analysis across work that may be very different across different SPA partners, sectors and locations. This does not mean the domains will necessarily be the entry-point for the stakeholders wanting

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<sup>2</sup> Note that changes in all of the domains should eventually contribute to this central domain. However, some work (such as direct humanitarian support or the work of Southern partners directly with communities) could also feature under this domain.

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to access the case studies. Rather, case studies could be accessed in many different ways, for example by searching according to region, country, sector of work or thematic area.

If the SPRS is successful, the domains of changes should last much longer than Danish MFA strategies, which change within short timeframes.

### **How many case studies are SPA partners expected to develop?**

Each SPA partner will produce three case studies per year, resulting in over 50 across the portfolio in year one, and over 250 by the end of year five. Case studies should be generated to high-quality M&E standards, using appropriate methodologies where necessary. However, Danish CSOs will be encouraged to use existing cases wherever possible (i.e. cases already developed through the normal course of monitoring, evaluation, research and ongoing experiences).

Each case study will be mapped onto one or more of the domains of change. The subject of the case studies will be up to each individual SPA partner. However, there will be plenty of leeway under the domains to focus on different areas of work. Some possibilities are listed in the table below. But please note these are inclusive not exclusive. They are designed to **illustrate** possibilities only.

**Table 2: Case studies set against domains of change**

Domain	Coverage
Changes in the <b>lives</b> of people facing poverty, marginalisation or vulnerability, and/or the realisation of their rights	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Changes in lives resulting from direct humanitarian interventions, either directly or through Southern partner agencies</li> <li>• The extent to which different groups or individuals have had their rights realised</li> <li>• Changes in lives resulting directly from initiatives of Southern partner agencies, such as health, peacebuilding, migration or climate adaption programmes</li> <li>• Direct (and evidenced) changes in lives resulting from advocacy, capacity or partnership work</li> <li>• Changes in people’s lives resulting from a targeted pilot study or piece of research, which may later be mainstreamed, adapted or replicated.</li> </ul>
Changes in laws, <b>policies</b> and practices that affect people’s rights	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Changes in a specific policy, introduction of a new policy, or prevention of a new policy.</li> <li>• Changes in the way a specific policy or practice is implemented</li> <li>• Changes in discourse, support or mobilisation around a specific policy</li> <li>• Changes in a series of policies or practices across different locations, but linked by a common theme (e.g. changes in climate change policies in multiple countries)</li> <li>• Systemic change at local, national or regional level (generally understood to require adjustments or transformations in the policies, practices, power dynamics, social norms or mindsets that underlie a societal issue)</li> </ul>
Changes in the <b>capacity</b> of organisations and communities to support people’s rights	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Changes in the capacity of a key Southern partner</li> <li>• Changes in the capacity of an external actor supported by an SPA partner or Southern partner, such as a government ministry, law enforcement agency or commercial organisation</li> <li>• Changes in the capacities of multiple partners in a specified area or sector (such as changes in their capacity to engage in advocacy work)</li> <li>• Empowerment of local civil society actors to hold duty bearers to account</li> <li>• Changes in the capacity of multiple agencies based on a new or innovative method of working</li> </ul>
Changes in <b>partnerships</b> and collaborations that support people’s rights	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The development of partnerships with new types of organisations such as social movements, private sector organisations or labour market organisations</li> <li>• The development of partnerships with different combinations of partners</li> <li>• Changes in the extent to which different groups collaborate or network</li> <li>• Changes in the enabling environment for civil society in the Global South (with a verifiable contribution for the SPA partner and/or Southern partner)</li> </ul>
Changes in the <b>participation</b> of groups facing poverty, marginalisation or vulnerability in their own development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Changes in gender equality, or the way women and girls participate within a specified project</li> <li>• Changes in the involvement of a specified group within a region or country such as youth, People Living with Disabilities, or the LGBTIQ+ community</li> </ul>

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Changes in the way different groups participate resulting from a geographic or sectoral approach to more inclusive programming</li> </ul>
Changes in <b>local leadership</b> and ownership of development and humanitarian work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Changes in the way a Southern partner or local groups are funded or receive support</li> <li>• Changes in the way a partner or group of partners participate in development or humanitarian efforts</li> <li>• Changes in the way an SPA partner supports local leadership or localisation</li> <li>• Changes in the way a Southern partner is able to engage with national and international stakeholders.</li> </ul>

### ***Should case studies focus on changes resulting from work carried out in the current SPA strategic period?***

It is accepted that changes identified in the current SPA period may sometimes be partly or largely the result of work carried out in previous strategic periods. However, it is important that cases reflect up-to-date knowledge, and do not merely refer to changes that have been known for several years. In addition, there needs to be a link to current work (e.g. a policy change where work is ongoing to support implementation of the policy, or changes in a partnership where the Danish CSO remains an active partner).

### ***How broad or specific should cases be?***

Whilst it is expected that many of the cases will focus on individual partners, projects, programmes or policies, cases may be broader in some contexts. Cases may, for example, focus on approaches used in multiple contexts or locations. The key issue is that they should be based around change and not just activities. For example, it would be valid to base case studies around:

- how SPA and Southern partner work is helping to bring about a certain kind of change (such as a change in women’s representation) across a range of organisations in different countries (possibly with some comparison of where this has been more/less successful);
- how a specific approach is being successfully promoted across a range of countries, focusing on the nature of the services and the changes they bring about, as well as stating the scale of support; or
- how policy is changing, or beginning to change, in multiple settings but according to a common theme, such as transformative education, peacebuilding or economic justice.

However, case studies should not primarily focus on individual people, families or communities. These could be used to illustrate change, but should not be the focus of the case study. Individual changes should always be located in the wider context.

### ***How should SPA partners select the case studies?***

Broadly speaking, SPA partners are encouraged to select cases that represent their most interesting work, especially with regard to the changes that work has contributed to. The cases should be purposefully sampled – meaning they are chosen because they are the most information-rich.<sup>3</sup> Some common ways of doing purposeful sampling are included in table 3 below, but again these are only suggestions of how SPA partners might select the cases.<sup>4 5</sup> It is expected that many of the cases will be ‘high impact (best) cases’. But SPA partners will also be encouraged to produce some case studies based on other sampling criteria. However, there will be no fixed requirements.

**Table 3: Possible sampling methods**

Type of case	Description
<b>High-impact case</b>	A case documented in-depth because of its impact. A high-visibility case that shows the best that can be achieved by an SPA partner and/or its partners.
<b>Teaching (or learning) case</b>	An in-depth case study that offers deep insights that may be useful for others. Innovative work would often come under this heading, particularly if generating significant learning for others, whether or not the innovation itself was successful.

<sup>3</sup> This is quite different from quantitative sampling, which normally involves random or representative sampling.

<sup>4</sup> The definition of the cases is based heavily on the work of Michael Patton.

<sup>5</sup> Normally, one or two sampling methods are selected for a research project or evaluation. In this case, the sampling methods will be used to outline some options for SPA partners. Therefore there is no need to restrict SPA partners to only one or two sampling methods.

<b>Critical case</b>	The weight of evidence from a single critical case may permit a high level of generalisation, because if true in one case it is likely to be true in other, similar cases. An SPA partner may present a critical case if it thinks it is likely to be typical of many, similar cases.
<b>Criterion-based case</b>	A case study based on a specific area of interest, such as one addressing local leadership, or working with social movements.
<b>Typical case studies</b>	Cases selected because they are believed to represent 'typical' results.
<b>Worst case</b>	A case showing where things have not been achieved, or have gone badly wrong. Worst cases often focus on learning that could help avoid similar problems in the future, and may focus on how specific challenges or barriers were overcome.
<b>Index case</b>	The first case to exhibit a phenomenon. For example, an index case could cover the first time an SPA partner has worked with a specific type of partner, way of working, or set of constituents.
<b>Causal pathway case</b>	A pathway case looks at a particular, critical area of an SPA partner's Theory of Change.
<b>Utilisation-focused case</b>	A case where examination of sufficient depth and detail will credibly inform decision-making or serve another key purpose.
<b>Comparative (positive deviance) case studies</b>	Cases that can compare and contrast approaches or changes, and where similarities and differences can be explained.
<b>Outlier case studies</b>	Unusual cases that would not be covered by random sampling, but which exhibit features of unusual interest.

Over time, some more prescriptive criteria might be developed. For example, if none of the first years' cases involve migration then MFA might need to promote this in subsequent years. Or SPA partners could be encouraged to develop case studies based on specified sectors or geographical areas linked to learning or evaluation questions.

In some circumstances, SPA partners may also choose to update cases, if there have been significant developments. This will help to ensure case studies are kept as up-to-date as possible, and will be particularly useful for cases where change at one level could lead to later changes. For example, a case study could be developed in one year demonstrating how an SPA partner contributed to a policy change, with the case study later being updated to assess how the policy change was being implemented, and with what effect. Or a case study could show how an innovative piece of work was affecting a small number of people, with a later update describing how the work had been replicated or mainstreamed.

In general, SPA partners are encouraged to select cases for which there is already significant evidence – for example, cases also included in SPA partner annual reports, or which can be derived from recent reviews or evaluations. However, sometimes SPA agencies might need to carry out some additional data collection and analysis, as it is expected that the case studies are based on high-quality evidence, including rigorous methods where necessary (e.g. statements regarding change across large numbers of people should always be backed up by credible evidence, such as a survey, rather than relying on anecdotal evidence).

Note also that cases may be based primarily on work carried out in previous funding periods, and may outlast the current funding period. As long as there is some link to current SPA funding/support they will be valid. The purpose of the case studies is to communicate the value of what SPA partners do, not to provide individual partner accountability for results within the current SPA period.

**Table 4: The four required characteristics of the case studies**

<p>Although guidance has been produced for case studies, as far as possible SPA partners are encouraged to be innovative and creative when selecting and developing the case studies, and to focus on areas of their work which they feel are the most interesting, or of which they are most proud. The only non-negotiables are that case studies should be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <b>Focused on change</b> at some level, not just on activities</li> <li>➤ <b>Backed up with evidence</b> that is credible, reliable and valid, with any appropriate caveats or uncertainties fully described</li> <li>➤ <b>Interesting</b>, representing work that some external stakeholders will enjoy reading about</li> <li>➤ <b>Completed according to the supplied template</b>, so that the information can be easily processed and placed onto the OpenAid platform</li> </ul>
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### ***What should the case studies look like?***

A standard template has been developed to enable a level of consistency across all of the case studies, along with accompanying guidelines. The template is very brief, consisting only of a series of short headings, with boxes. SPA partners should use the template when publishing case studies and must not change the formatting. The template includes the following sections:

- header information (name of SPA and Southern partners, start and end date of the work, etc.);
- change;
- context;
- contribution;
- activities;
- lessons; and
- evidence.

Partners can forward any supplementary, confidential information to MFA desk officers bilaterally to avoid sharing it publicly as part of case studies.

The boxes are required for automatic processing, and the first six boxes are mandatory. However, there is considerable flexibility for what should be covered within the different boxes, and this may be different from case to case. This is all covered in the guidelines for the case studies.

At some stage – depending partly on how useful the SPRS proves to be – the cases could be developed into a more suitable format for public consumption. This might mean adopting the kind of professional layouts and colour schemes more associated with marketing or publicity-oriented cases.

### ***How will cases be tagged?***

Cases mapped onto the domains of change will not necessarily be that useful for considering changes against other criteria, such as the sector or work or type of constituent. Therefore, each case will also involve a system of tagging, whereby key criteria can be tagged on a simple word sheet or database. Essentially, this will comprise a set of tick boxes so that SPA partners can indicate which areas of interest are covered by each case. This kind of system will enable case studies to be retrieved at a later date according to different criteria. For example, a user should be able to retrieve all the case studies concerning ‘support to refugees in the MENA region’ or cases involving ‘climate change and youth’.

The tagging system may include areas such as:

- The domains of change – both primary and secondary.
- The key thematic areas of the Danish development strategy, “A Changing World” (2025), namely, job creation, economic growth, trade, and investment; response to conflicts, forced displacements, and irregular migration; a just, sustainable and green transition; democracy and human rights; and education and health

### ***How should case studies be submitted?***

SPA partners are responsible for publishing case on their own website. The submission of case studies follows the annual process for reporting on previous years. Case studies shall be submitted to the MFA via email to the relevant desk officer. The email should also include links to case studies published on the SPA partner’s website. Links to case studies on SPA partners’ website should be “permalinks”, i.e. links that do not change over time, and the SPA partner should inform the MFA in case links change due to circumstances such as website updates or similar reasons.

Case studies should follow the standard template to ensure that cases are comparable and accessible to both the general public and MFA staff. Please note that case studies are thus publicly available and must be cleared for GDPR and have undergone copyright clearance to allow the MFA to reproduce (parts of) case studies. This includes any attached audio-visual materials.

### ***What will be the process for processing the case studies?***

MFA will set out the timescales and deadlines for producing the case studies each year. The case studies could go through three rounds of review and quality assurance (QA).

- It is recommended that SPA partners should swap the case studies with other interested SPA partners to provide some brief feedback. This is because external agencies are quite likely to pick up common mistakes, such as referring to internal acronyms or terminology that do not make much sense outside of the SPA partner concerned. An initial review might also identify where there are gaps in the case study, or where evidence is weak or absent. Where possible, swapping could be done between agencies in the same line of work, who could benefit from the joint learning.

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- Once submitted, MFA will place the case studies onto the OpenAid system. There may be an additional round of review here, depending on the level of available resources.
- The MFA may quality assure case studies in further details as necessary. This might involve carrying out some primary data collection to check that the evidence for case studies was reliable. This could also be done as part of SPA partner reviews, mid-term reviews or evaluations.

## The output indicators

Case studies provide in-depth assessments of realised outcomes. These will be complemented by selected output indicators to capture the scale of interventions and to demonstrate contributions to the Danish development strategy by each SPA. To do this, each SPA partner is required to map between two and five indicators from its summary results framework against the thematic areas from the development strategy and measure relevant outputs using three MFA standard measurement types, which are outlined in the below and will be supported by detailed reference sheets.

Where possible, the output indicators are meant to cumulate contributions from various interventions from within each SPA. For example, where the SPA partner works on related interventions across different countries or regions. SPA partners are thus encouraged to consider how individual contributions can be summarised into overall outputs in relation to the strategy.

To ensure that output indicators capture relevant results against the development strategy, the specific output indicators will be agreed between individual SPA partners and the MFA through the following process:

- *Application process:* Each SPA application should include two to five suggested output indicators as part of the proposed summary results framework. These outputs must follow the criteria outlined in the below.
- *Upon commitment:* The MFA will review suggested output indicators and engage in dialogues with successful SPA partners to adjust output indicators, where necessary, to ensure clear contributions towards the aims of the Danish development strategy. Please note that output indicators may need to be updated in case of a new strategy.

### ***How should output indicators be defined?***

Output indicators are to be integrated into summary results frameworks, submitted by SPA partners as part of the application process, and will be reported on annually together with the narrative report as outlined in administrative guidelines. They are referred to as “outputs” as they should capture the scale of interventions through quantitative counts of immediate results, although SPA partners may decide to elevate inclusion criteria to reflect achievements that are closer to realised outcomes.

Each output indicator must capture contributions towards one or more thematic areas from the Danish development strategy. The MFA recognises the unique contributions by each partner organisation and SPA partners are thus not required to cover all thematic areas, although SPA partners are encouraged to show contributions towards at least two thematic areas across output indicators if possible. The current thematic areas from the Danish development strategy, entitled “A Changing World” (2025), are as follows:

1. Job creation, economic growth, trade, and investment
2. Response to conflicts, forced displacements, and irregular migration
3. A just, sustainable and green transition
4. Democracy and human rights
5. Education and health

To focus efforts, and allow for the necessary quality assurance, SPA partners should limit output indicators to between two (2) and five (5) indicators in total for each agreement, while the summary results framework will of course include more indicators. SPA partners are thus encouraged to carefully consider which contributions they would like to highlight as output indicators.

While each output indicator must show contributions towards a thematic area and follow the below measurement types, there is no predefined phrasing for output indicators. This will allow SPA partners to integrate existing output-level indicators from alliances or local partnerships and utilise these to capture specific contributions to the Danish development strategy. As such, the choice of output indicators should be viewed as a mapping between project level contributions and strategy aims.

### ***What are the measurement types?***

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While output indicators should be phrased to reflect SPA partner interventions, they should adhere to the following standard measurement types. For example, while an output indicator may be defined to count “# of children graduating from primary education”, it should follow the measurement criteria for the relevant measurement type listed below. In this case, it should follow the measurement type on “# of people reached directly through interventions.”

This will ensure a certain level of uniformity in how output indicators are measured and reported across all SPA partners. In the example of primary education, it means that inclusion is counted through “direct reach” and that double-counting is avoided. The MFA will publish detailed reference sheets for each measurement type at the end of the application process, which will inform dialogues with successful applicants to finalise the selection of output indicators for each SPA.

Measurement types will be defined around the following broad categories:

1. **# of people reached directly through interventions**  
Aims to capture how many people have benefitted directly from Danish development assistance. Spans thematic areas such as job creation, migration, youth engagement, education and humanitarian interventions.
2. **# of Southern partners directly supported through interventions**  
Acts as a proxy for “localization” through support directly to Southern partners – and complimented by a qualitative score to characterise “equal partnership” in working with Southern partners (to compliment national partnerships).
3. **# of contributions to policy changes by interventions**  
Seeks to list contributions to policy changes by interventions funded by Danish development assistance and complimented by a qualitative assessment of the internalisation of changes and linkage with Danish interests.

The following table provides examples of how the measurement types may be applied in practice:

	PEOPLE	PARTNERS	POLICY
JOB, GROWTH, TRADE AND INVESTMENT	▪ # of people reached (e.g. jobs created, people receiving training, etc.)	▪ # of Southern partners (e.g. number of commercial partners engaged in projects)	▪ # of policy changes (e.g. number of policies to support eco. growth and job creation)
CONFLICTS, DISPLACEMENT AND MIGRATION	▪ # of people reached (e.g. number of people helped and migrants supported)	▪ # of Southern partners (e.g. local partners working in conflicts and host communities)	▪ # of policy changes (e.g. number of policies to support displaced peoples and migrants)
JUST, SUSTAINABLE AND GREEN TRASITION	▪ # of people reached (e.g. agricultural workers and adaptation in communities)	▪ # of Southern partners (e.g. community groups and labour market groups)	▪ # of policy changes (e.g. number of sustainable and green policies supported)
DEMOCRACY AND HUMAN RIGHTS	▪ # of people reached (e.g. human rights defenders supported and youth engagement)	▪ # of Southern partners (e.g. youth groups)	▪ # of policy changes (e.g. contributions to policies by community and youth groups)
EDUCATION AND HEALTH	▪ # of people reached (e.g. number of students and people receiving health care)	▪ # of Southern partners (e.g. number of education and health organisations)	▪ # of policy changes (e.g. contributions to education and health policies)

This will allow SPA partners to map existing indicators from interventions and proposed summary results frameworks to highlight contributions towards the Danish development strategy. For example, an SPA partner may choose to map existing indicators such as “# of agricultural jobs created in forest areas” (related to the measurement on people) or “# of Southern partners working with localization in host communities” (related to the measurement on partners).

### **How will output indicators be reported on?**

The MFA will provide reference sheets with detailed definitions on each measurement type and templates for reporting on output indicators following the application process. These will consist of inclusion and exclusion criteria for counting output

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contributions, which will be defined in dialogue with successful applicants, and a standard Excel-sheet to be submitted together with narrative reports annually. The Excel-sheet will also include a section asking SPA partners to outline how each output indicator has been measured, e.g. explaining additional criteria used such as demographics and similar approaches. For the measurement type on policy changes, SPA partners will be asked to list brief assessments of the changes included.

Please refer to the SPA administrative guidelines for deadlines and overall submission requirements.

***Suggested approach to defining output indicators***

1. Identify between two and five immediate outputs from across SPA interventions to be highlighted
2. Map each output against the thematic areas in the Danish development strategy to show contributions
3. Define measurable indicators using the MFA standard measurement types on people, partners and policy
4. Integrate the output indicators into the summary results framework, while marking which ones they are